

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
MINUTES
October 3, 2002

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, Lamar Smith, Norm Wallen, Sandee McCullen, Glendon Collins, Mary Dahl, Lorraine Eiler, Chris Newell, Lee Aitken, William Branan, Steve Saway

ABSENT: Hector Ruedas, John Neal, Rick Holloway, Sanford Cohen, Joe Lane

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Don Charpio, Shela McFarlin, Greg Simmons, Merv Boyd, Mike Taylor, Don Ellsworth, Elaine Zielinski, Carl Rountree, John Christensen, Ron Hooper, Bill Civish, Tony Garrett (Washington Office), Susan Williams

PRESENTERS & GUESTS: Don Shein, Tammy Pike/Arizona State Land Department

AGENDA ITEM: Meeting called to Order (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)
Welcome and Introduction of RAC Members

DISCUSSION: The Chair called the meeting to order at the National Training Center at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of October 3, 2002. Frances thanked everyone for attending. Greetings and introductions were then made around the room.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Review August 1, 2002 meeting minutes.

DISCUSSION: Top of page five discussion of Las Cienegas listed Karen Simms as detailer and person listed should be Shela McFarlin

ACTION: August minutes were approved and seconded by the RAC.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Introduction, Update on Legislation, Regulations, and other Statewide Issues. (Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director and other BLM staff.)

DISCUSSION:

Elaine has copies of letters for new and reappointed members to the RAC signed by Secretary Norton. The letters are in the mail to the RAC members. I appreciate the new members and those that have committed to another term on the RAC. Elaine has enjoyed working with the RACs in both Oregon and Washington.

Highlights and Issues: Borderland issues that Arizona is dealing with right now. There was a Borderland Management Taskforce meeting on September 25, 2002, which was an excellent meeting. Approximately 60-70 people were in attendance. Federal and State agencies were represented to share information on some of the challenges that all of the agencies are facing as far as undocumented immigrants (UDI's), deaths of UDI's, damage to lands and drug traffic. There are some really complicated issues with no easy solutions. Attendees at the conference broke up into working groups and presented good ideas on how we can work together and implement policies on how to deal with the human and natural resource impacts. The Southwest Strategy group has taken on the issue and will be doing more follow up. Permits were granted to Humane Borders through 2003 for placement of water stations on public lands from May to September 2002 and May to September 2003. This is a short-term solution that needed to be implemented because of the number of UDI deaths. BLM California, Fish & Wildlife and the National Park Service also allow water stations. The water stations are being monitored for quantity and quality of water. BLM

has assigned additional rangers to help patrol the area. The Borderland Management Taskforce group that met in September will take the next step to see what can be done for a long-term solution.

Norm Wallen: It is not your job to challenge federal policy, but what is the exception that the other agencies might consider as far as federal policy is considered?

Elaine Zielinski: We are still in the planning process and there is a need to look at and recognize the issue.

Norm Wallen: More coordination is needed between the agencies.

Carl Rountree: This was an issue that took a good part of the Southwest Strategy meeting in Albuquerque. They recognize the enormity of the issues, security issues and resource damage. We have no plan to implement a national policy. Elaine and the others will be meeting in November at a strategic planning meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Fire Update

(Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director)

As all of you are well aware, the 2002 fire season was the earliest and longest in history. From day one BLM was very involved in fire activities and suppression. BLM Arizona had 94 human-caused fires and 20 lightning-caused fires. BLM employees were assigned to fires in Arizona and nationwide. There will not be as many prescribed fires due to the drought. We did do all of the work in the wildland interface areas (5,000 acres) and also made approximately \$400,000 available to the fire assistance program.

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: How does BLM define wildland fires?

Mike Taylor: When the BLM did an assessment of Arizona they looked at communities that had an interface. You have private land urban growth area near forest areas. BLM did an assessment looking at BLM lands and where they had communities. BLM looks at the community and it's defensible space and works with the community for fuel education and fuel reduction.

Merv Boyd: Site-specific area (Black Canyon City, AZ) the science is fuel type and rate of spread to determine how much of a buffer is needed between structures.

William Branen: I wonder if we will ever be in a position to be burning enough prescribed fires to keep up with the fuels?

Elaine Zielinski: If we continue doing prescribed burning at the rate that we have been conducting prescribed burns it would be decades before we would catch up. It was an incredible year for both prescribed and wildland fires.

Tony Garrett: The 2002 wildland fire season had fewer fires than the 10-year average, however, in terms of acres burned we were near double the 10-year average.

William Branen: If we get everything right it doesn't seem possible that we can burn at the level that we should be burning to keep up with the fuels.

Norm Wallen: The people hiking and camping are going to burn a lot of the forest.

Lamar Smith: We have to look beyond fire because I cannot see that the people will tolerate the level of burning that is required to maintain the lands.

Elaine Zielinski: Obviously there is a lot interest and energy on this project. It has taken many years for us to get to this point and there will be no quick solution. The funding that we receive from the National Fire Plan has been a great help.

Safford Trespass

Bill Civish: Cattle trespass has been an issue in the Safford area for a long time. We have recently had a Federal court decision that supports the stance of BLM. BLM feels that from a safety standpoint we want to look at all options and how to address the issue. We are going to follow up on the trespass route rather

than the impound route. We are working with the U.S. Solicitor and the U.S. Attorney. We want to make sure both the public and employees are not put at an unacceptable risk on the actions taken.

Indemnity Lieu Selections in the State: Acreage that BLM owes the State of Arizona.

Elaine Zielinski: We have been working to get approximately 15,200 acres for the State of Arizona and the process should be completed by the end of the month. BLM is planning a ceremony with Governor Hull and Secretary Norton for the indemnity lieu handoff.

Lake Havasu Fisheries Project Improvement Celebration:

Don Ellsworth: The invitations were sent out in the mail last week. The celebration will be on November 21, 2002 (10 a.m.–12 p.m.) in Lake Havasu City.

Elaine Zielinski: There has been a lot of great work to improve sport fisheries and access. This is a celebration for all the volunteers that have helped in the project.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Land Tenure Strategy and Land and Water Conservation Fund Acquisitions
(Mike Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources)

You will remember back at the RAC meeting in Tucson several months ago we talked about the land tenure situation in the State of Arizona. We talked about the indemnity lieu and Fort Huachuca. We recognized as an agency where we needed to go as far as land acquisitions. We need to think about a strategy for moving forward. Frances Werner, Steve Saway and Rick Holloway have expressed an interest in helping. We also laid out part of the way to address the land tenure adjustment. The lands workshop was very successful and we found a lot of things that we need to do to make our program work better. We need to organize our land structure in the State office to help us be more efficient in our lands and have agreed as a State Leadership Team on a number of actions to implement. We also had some options for reorganization in the State office with our lands program and now have six different options. The RAC wants to help with land tenure adjustments in the future. Right now we have folks gathering the needs of each Field Office, lands that need to be acquired and lands that the State of Arizona is interested in acquiring. We are putting together specific plans for lands in the monuments and now are at the point to ask the RAC for help in developing this plan. Some information is still outstanding. One is the proposition on the ballot if the State of Arizona can enter into agreements with different entities. If the State of Arizona doesn't receive approval then we need to look at other options. Hopefully the ballot initiative will pass.

DISCUSSION:

Frances Werner: Material from the Secretary of State office about the different propositions. There is a massive misunderstanding that these lands are exchanged value for value and not acre for acre. The press has mentioned that the exchanges are very unfair to the trust. The value for value concept has been lost completely and I don't know how the public can be educated before the November vote.

Mike Taylor: A lot of the work done on the proposition was based on information that the Federal government uses. The value of the land is important and you have to show the public that you are getting value for value.

Norm Wallen: Land appraisals should be based on what the lands really are worth and not simply by how much lands in the area are being sold for. A lot of the people who are angry are thinking of past private exchanges.

Steve Saway: The RAC may have ideas or suggestions.

Mike Taylor: We have been working with the editorial boards of the newspaper. They know about the statewide land exchange agreement but have not focused on the issue. It would be nice if the editorial boards would of taken on the issue six months ago.

Elaine Zielinski: I believe for propositions the Federal agencies (BLM) do not take a position, however, BLM can talk facts and provide information.

Chris Newell: I know on the Arizona Strip that much of the opposition is centered on lands that are chosen for exchange and issues regarding development. This is a larger issue than land value.

Mike Taylor: Across the State of Arizona the issues are the same

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Noxious Weeds – Sonoran Desert Project
(Phillip Cooley, BLM Resource Advisor)

I work with the range program and head the program for noxious weeds. I work with groups of land managers and people interested in preventing the spread and introduction of weeds. The Sonoran Desert was overlooked. The Nature Conservancy, BLM, Arizona State Lands Department, ADOT and the military (Yuma and Barry Goldwater Ranges) are working to help stop the spread of noxious weeds through the Sonoran Desert. We are in the infancy of this process. Three groups are forming: two cooperative management area borderlands, Yuma Field Office and the Yuma Proving Grounds. These groups will coordinate, map and decide how to keep the weeds from crossing boundaries. The third is the Sonoran Desert Invasive Weed Counsel, which will coordinate between the two management areas by sharing data once we have a process and receive funding. A noxious weed is a legal term that has to be defined by State or Federal law. In the Sonoran, we don't have many true noxious weeds. We are hoping to get started while things are still small. This past Saturday (9/28/2002) the NPLD, BLM, County and National Parks got involved to celebrate National Public Lands Day and started removing fountain grass at Lake Pleasant. It was a great experience. Approximately 40 people helped remove two tons of fountain grass from the park entrance. A lot of the people are interested in doing more projects in the Sonoran for removal of buffle grass, fountain grass and multistar thistle.

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: What are the criteria where one species can be invasive and not in another?

Phillip Cooley: In the Sonoran Desert we have 365 frost-free days. Once you move north of Phoenix you get into frost and the plant isn't able to grow as well. The buffle and fountain grasses get started along the roads and get into the communities and is fire fuel.

Norm Wallen: A plant may not be invasive depending on where it is.

Philip Cooley: They are working on a list for California, Nevada and Arizona to identify which weeds are invasive and where.

Norm Wallen: How are you dealing with the issue on chemicals?

Phillip Cooley: We are looking at managing the weed problem through an integrated approach. Buffle grass, fountain grass and multistar thistle are easily removed by pulling the plant. A patch of salt cedar in Ajo, Arizona is tough to remove because of the root system. In certain cases chemicals may need to be required. We want to use the best tool for the job.

Norm Wallen: It may be smart to list the priorities and declare chemicals as the last resort.

Phillip Cooley: The best method for noxious weed removal is by using mechanical methods (shovel).

Elaine Zielinski: I think there is a vegetation management EIS looking at the big picture.

Phillip Cooley: The group is looking at non-native invasive species. We have tried to remain flexible as things happen. As we start we need to start small. We have a problem and hope to get a hold on a smaller

problem. As we discuss these situations we realize that we cross international boundaries. We need to start here in Arizona. The public needs to get involved at the local level.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Arizona Planning Updates (Greg Simmons, BLM Planning and Environmental Coordinator)

We do have six major planning efforts going on in the State of Arizona. One is nearing completion. The first of ten scoping meetings began last Saturday. These meetings will be going on through October 16, 2002 and the scoping report should be out this winter.

We have scheduled a one-day workshop with cooperating agencies at the Arizona State Office on October 30, 2002 in conference room 1a. We will go through the process on what it means to be a cooperating agency. An Arizona Regional Land Use Planning Conference will be held on November 20-21, 2002 at the Westward Look Resort in Tucson, Arizona. The State Office website provides detailed information about the conference and we will get the information to the RAC. On November 22, 2002 there will be a tour of the Ironwood Forest National Monument

DISCUSSION:

Deborah Stevens: I suggested to the RAC yesterday with regard to the national conference that there is a proposal for the other RAC's to have a business meeting on November 20, 2002. If there is a discussion during the working groups meeting today, they may want to designate a couple of people to attend the Arizona Regional Land Use Planning Conference in Tucson.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals (BLM Field Managers)

Shela McFarlin: The Tucson Field Office (TFO) doesn't have a proposal today, but Grant Drennen is writing a letter to existing RRT members. They are working on a proposal on the Empire Ranch.

DISCUSSION:

William Brannan: The TFO report mentions an upcoming event called Jamboree to be held in an area that we would prefer not to be used

Shela McFarlin: We did the PFC to find this out. There are small pools of water that do not contain enough water to support the tadpoles. They made a decision that this year they will not allow the event to access that area. We are putting together management information for protection of the area. There are other washes in the area that have not been evaluated where you have scouring and flooding occurring of the land. The event will be held but will not include the Jawbreaker Trail. We may be able to come up with limits of acceptable change. OHV impact needs to be assessed.

Steve Saway: Was the user community allowed to comment?

Shela McFarlin: Yes. The EA is available for you to read.

Glendon Collins: I see the OHV community in this area often functioning much like the ranchers function by taking reactions as a threat to their continued existence and it should not be viewed this way. The Middle Gila Conservation Project will be meeting again next month. They will take the road and trail inventory on as a pilot project to work out what road and trail plans are to be for a pilot plan north of the Gila River, which is north of the Florence Junction Highway on what should be roads and trails. The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership makes no decisions but tries to make recommendations to the BLM and the Arizona State Land Use Department.

Norm Wallen: With reference to illegal shooting and the addition of more rangers have you seen an improvement?

Shela McFarlin: This is still a problem. We are looking at having signs made and posting them to notify people that they are shooting in an area where people live. Some people are out shooting in the middle of the night.

Norm Wallen: Are the penalties/fines being paid?

Shela McFarlin: If they don't have a drivers license they usually don't pay their fines.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: FIELD MANAGER REPORTS

Arizona Strip - Planning Update

Arizona Strip planners recently completed the scoping report for the Strip's planning effort, which summarizes public comments received. The Arizona Strip received about 2,200 comments, with about 300 specific to grazing. The resounding message given was, "Keep the Strip as it is, don't change a thing because we like it just as it is."

The comments regarding grazing ranged from "grazing and ranching operations should remain unchanged" to "livestock grazing should be eliminated." The comments about no change tended to not specify area, while those seeking to limit or eliminate grazing generally referred to just Grand Canyon-Parashant and Vermilion Cliffs National Monuments.

Those favoring grazing stated that livestock grazing is a legitimate use of the public lands on the Arizona Strip and should be continued as one of the many multiple uses. Comments more critical of grazing recommended evaluating impacts of livestock grazing and developing management options for mitigating negative impacts, especially as they relate to desert tortoise. Others called for restoration of overgrazed grasslands and for implementing creative solutions to grazing impacts.

Arizona Strip planners are now working with cooperating agencies to develop alternatives for the management plans for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and the remaining BLM land between the two monuments.

Condors Released

Biologists from The Peregrine Fund released four more California condors at the Vermilion Cliffs September 25, bringing the population of free-flying condors in Arizona to 31. The wild condors have mostly been seen around the Vermilion Cliffs, Kaibab Plateau and Grand Canyon.

SAFFORD FIELD MANAGER REPORT FOR THE RAC

The **Dos Pobres-San Juan Final Environmental Impact Statement** for Phelps Dodge's proposed copper mine north of Safford is scheduled for completion this winter. A disagreement between the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and BLM regarding the water models has been a major delay. A February 2002 decision by Assistant Secretary of the Interior Steven Griles outlines a process in which BIA and BLM will engage in a facilitated effort to (1) revise and improve the proposed groundwater monitoring and mitigation plan for the project; (2) conduct Tribal consultation; and (3) and complete the NEPA process and Final Environmental Impact Statement. The U.S. Geological Survey was designated as the third-party facilitator. In addition, Griles requested a schedule and timeline showing how this facilitated process will be accomplished; that timeline has been completed. Griles also requested a quick determination from the Solicitor's Office on the groundwater model. Graham County and City of Safford officials are concerned about the completion of the Final EIS for the project, and will be contacting the Arizona delegation and DOI officials during future Washington visits to ensure timely completion.

The new **Aravaipa Canyon Online Reservation System** provides greater customer service to public land users by allowing them to book their own permits online. This gives hikers 24-hour access to the reservation system instead of tying them to BLM's office hours. It also saves users the cost of long-distance phone calls. In the long run, the system will also be a savings to the BLM by saving staff time used to manually process hiking permits. The call-in reservation system is still available for those without internet access. In addition to the reservation system, the entire Aravaipa Canyon website was updated to provide a wealth of information about geology, history, and natural resources in addition to important access and recreation information. Both sites can be visited through the BLM Arizona website at www.az.blm.gov then click on Online Reservations.

The long-awaited **Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area brochure** was published in July (copy in packet). This colorful brochure will be a key component to Graham County's tourism marketing. The large map provided in the brochure is a big step toward providing public information about the area, especially which roads are designated for use; this will help prevent illegal off-highway vehicle entry and protect the area's sensitive riparian ecosystem. The map was printed in two versions: a color glossy paper version that is free and a synthetic, waterproof version designed for those floating the river that will sell for \$3.

The **Graham County Tourism Task Force** is moving forward aggressively to promote the county's many natural and cultural attractions. The BLM public lands are a critical piece of the puzzle and the BLM is actively participating in **Gateway Community** activities, with Field Manager Bill Civish chairing the Task Force. The Gila Box and Aravaipa Canyon are considered as two of the top destinations in the county. A county-wide interagency bird checklist is nearing completion and a publication produced by the local newspaper (copy in packet) is being distributed at area hotels. It has many articles about BLM recreation areas and features Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness on the cover. The Field Office works closely with writers and photographers from *Arizona Highways* to promote BLM recreation and scenic areas.

Projects are currently in progress with both *National Geographic* and *Sunset* magazine that will feature Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness and provide international exposure.

Safford Field Office **drought** assessment and utilization monitoring efforts are continuing. Despite the onset of summer precipitation, the rainfall forecasters for southeastern Arizona are predicting normal to below-normal summer precipitation amounts. Drought-stressed forage requires time to recover therefore light grazing use is preferred ($\pm 20\%$ of the current season's growth) and is acceptable in properly managed pastures. Overall, complete rest for the duration of the current growing season is preferred followed by light use during the fall through early winter. This year's wildfire situation, in combination with the current drought, has severely curtailed the **Standards and Guidelines** monitoring and evaluation process. Efforts are proceeding to collect scientifically sound Ecological Site Inventory data for the Standards and Guidelines.

This year's record **drought**, combined with impacts of **undocumented immigrants'** escaped campfires plus the usual lightning-caused fires, has resulted in a large workload in **wildfire suppression**. Spring wildfires hit in the Southwest a full two months earlier than usual; most offices were severely understaffed as season hiring was not yet completed. With the monsoons arriving and fire danger lessening, the suppression focus is now shifting to other areas of the country. The Safford-Tucson fire management zone is extremely active in the fire program. Larry Humphrey's Type 1 Team has several BLM team members who are on call for national assignments. They have already been out on several assignments this year including the Rodeo-Chediski, Arizona's largest wildfire in history. The Safford-Tucson Zone's have 75 people who are trained and red-carded in some aspect of fire suppression; of these, about 50 travel to fires and other incidents throughout the nation. The fire program also hires ten on-call Emergency Firefighters (EFF), seasonal engine crews, and a youth crew called the Sapotistas, all of which assist with off-zone assignments. BLM's single-engine air tanker (SEAT) base at the Safford Airport is considered a national model; Safford fire staff conducts training for other states throughout the West. As part of the National Fire Plan outreach, training in basic wildfire fire suppression was conducted with community volunteer fire departments.

Plans are underway to celebrate **National Public Lands Day** on September 28 with volunteer projects along the Black Hills Back Country Byway and in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Volunteers will be recruited from local organizations, businesses, youth groups, and scout troops.

DATE: September 20, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

PREPARED BY: John R. Christensen, Kingman Field Manager

1. SUBJECT: Programmatic EA for Bighorn Sheep Translocation

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: This document provides a summary of the environmental assessment being prepared for bighorn translocation in Kingman Field Office area wide.

Background: The Arizona Game and Fish Department has proposed translocation of bighorn from the Black Mountains, Arizona, to historical bighorn habitat, located at nine sites, in the Kingman Field Office, over the next 20 years. Seven of the sites involve public land and two are located on State and Private lands only. The program (proposed action) includes bighorn sheep capture, bighorn sheep release, predator control, and water development.

ISSUES: Twenty-eight public comment letters were received during the public review period. The public was concerned primarily with the following issues:

- a. **Predator control:** Predator control on public lands both inside and outside of wilderness. This EA analyzes the potential impacts of predator control actions in wilderness (effects on solitude, naturalness etc). Analysis outside of wilderness was done by APHIS 1999* in another EA.
- b. **Water development:** There is a potential for development of three additional waters for bighorn within the project area. One is on state land and two on public lands. The issue addressed is whether bighorn need free water to survive.
- c. **Forage availability:** The issue addressed is whether there is enough forage available for additional bighorn in the project area. The potential population of bighorn in the project area over the next 20 years is well within the amount of forage allocated for wildlife in BLM's grazing EISs.
- d. **Livestock operation vandalism and fence modification for bighorn:** The project may cause an increase in vandalism (8-10 hunter increase over the next 20 years) and may result in proposals to modify some existing fences and build new fences using bighorn friendly specifications. The concern is whether these fences will hold livestock. Bureau specifications for bighorn fences are designed to hold livestock.
- e. **Wilderness:** Effects of the proposed action to wilderness character are being evaluated.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: BLM 's role is to:

1. Analyze the techniques of predator control. The decision is to authorize, or not, these techniques for public land.
2. Determine if there is enough forage and habitat available for bighorn in the project area.
3. Determine impacts of two new water developments.
4. Impacts to wilderness character are primarily from helicopter flight activity associated with release and monitoring actions. There are also identified impacts from predator control actions (sights and sounds of using trailing dogs).

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: BLM is prepared to issue a final decision in about one month. Appeals may be received from two animal protection groups and possibly from livestock operators in the affected area.

*Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), 1999. Predator Damage Management on Federal Public Lands in Arizona, United States Department of Agriculture, Phoenix, Arizona.

DATE: September 18, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

PREPARED BY: John R. Christensen, Kingman Field Manager

SUBJECT: Kingman Field Office Drought Response

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To describe actions Kingman Field Office has taken to address the current drought.

ISSUES: Kingman Field Office has been subjected to a severe drought for the last two years. Because of this drought, we have been coordinating closely with local ranchers to protect soil and vegetation resources and address declining range conditions in certain areas.

We have taken the following steps:

1. We sent a general letter to all permittees on March 13, 2002 expressing concern about continuing drought conditions. This letter encouraged cooperation in taking non-use where appropriate to reduce the stress on forage plants.
2. Range specialists have spent considerable time and effort monitoring vegetation use on allotments from March to the present time.
3. Range staff and managers met with Mohave Livestock Association on June 11 to discuss our actions and their concerns.

4. We conducted field trips to allotments of concern with resource specialists, permittees, Mohave Livestock Association, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and interested publics.
5. We will hold a follow-up meeting on September 25 with Mohave Livestock Association and Arizona Game and Fish Department, followed by a letter to all permittees describing our drought related actions for the next six months.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: We have closed portions of grazing allotments, but have avoided closing entire allotments through this continued coordination.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: Kingman Field Office will continue to hold livestock at reduced levels through at least next spring or summer to ensure adequate rest for drought-stressed vegetation. Permittees are concerned about the drought impact on their operations.

DATE: September 23, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Patricia Taylor, Assistant Field Manager for Lands & Customer Service

SUBJECT: Topock (PG&E) Compressor Station

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

This document provides the status of contamination and cleanup at the Topock Compressor Station.

ISSUE:

Since 1951, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) has operated a natural gas compressor station on the California side of the Colorado River, west of Topock, Arizona. A chromium-based solution, used to inhibit corrosion and biological growth in the cooling towers, has been discharged into the environment. Residual contamination has reached groundwater. California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has required a corrective action work plan.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

BLM is cooperating with other DOI bureaus and California Environmental Protection Agency/DTSC to further evaluate the extent of contamination and recover damages for resources, injuries and losses caused by the contamination.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

BLM will continue to work with PG&E, and other agencies involved to determine the extent of contamination and pursue cleanup and resource damages at Topock.

DATE: 9/3/2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Cindy Barnes, Rangeland Management Specialist

SUBJECT: Wild Burro Management – Reaching AML

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

Update progress on reaching Appropriate Management Levels (AML) on the herd management areas (HMAs) managed by the Lake Havasu Field Office.

ISSUE:

The populations of the two herd management areas (Havasu and Alamo) managed by LHFO have been over AML for many years. There is currently a strategy in place to achieve AML in all HMAs by 2004.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

We are making progress toward reaching AML in both HMAs. Alamo is scheduled to achieve AML in 2003 and Havasu is scheduled for 2004.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Gathers to reach AML must be coordinated with adoptions so that the Bureau of Land Management does not end up with excess animals requiring additional facilities. This can effect plans for reaching AML.

DATE: September 23, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Mike Henderson, Assistant Field Manager, Recreation & Visitor Services

SUBJECT: Deferred Maintenance Program

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

To provide basic information on the Lake Havasu Field Office deferred maintenance program and projects that are completed, ongoing, or funded in the future.

ISSUE:

The LHFO has received several million dollars from the Washington Office earmarked for recreational facilities projects along the lower Colorado River that have deteriorated over the years because of inadequate maintenance funding. The high priority projects target environmental and public safety hazards. Some projects are funded for one year, while larger projects require multiple years to complete.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

During the past few years, LHFO has completed six deferred maintenance projects including:

- Bank stabilization at the BLM Empire Landing Campground on the Parker Strip Recreation Area;
- Replacement of 30-year-old amenities at BLM visitor sites along the Parker Strip including six vault restrooms with new SST block restrooms; old wooden shade ramadas with new steel shade structures;
- New SST block restroom at the Colorado River Nature Center in Bullhead City;
- Replacement of old fiberglass outhouses on Lake Havasu with new SST block restrooms serving some of the 105 boat-in access only sites. Currently, LHFO is continuing to construct new SST block restrooms at the recreation sites on Lake Havasu with a planned completion date of May 2003, in which 40 restrooms will have been installed to serve 61 sites. In addition, the bank stabilization project continues on Lake Havasu, stabilizing the banks at 30 sites from further erosion by May of 2003.

Projects funded for 2003 include completion of two bank stabilization projects on the Parker Strip for flood control, remodeling of the Take Off Point boat ramp on Lake Havasu, in partnership with La Paz County, and replacement of 30-year old restrooms at the BLM Empire Landing Campground, and the completion of the Parker Strip Visitor Contact Station.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Approximately 10 million visitors each year use recreational facilities along the Colorado River in the Lake Havasu Field Office area. Most facilities BLM offers are two to three decades old and were not constructed to accommodate the high volume of visitor use days. This, coupled with the lack of funding for routine maintenance, has placed the safety and convenience of many visitors and facilities in jeopardy.

DATE: September 19, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Kirk Koch, Manager

SUBJECT: Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

Acknowledge accomplishments of the 10-year program partnership (involving federal and state agencies with the private sector) and define direction for program completion and future maintenance and monitoring.

ISSUE:

This \$28 million partnership program was initiated in 1992, with three primary goals to achieve: improve the fishery (game and non-game) of Lake Havasu; provide non-boating shoreline fishing sites; and repatriate two native and endangered species into the lake (bonytail chub and razorback sucker). Achieving each goal required extensive contributions and participation by the partners (BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, California Department of Fish and Game, and Anglers United) and BLM has served as the lead agency to facilitate the program.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

On November 21, 2002, this program will celebrate its achievement of a primary goal for placement of the 875 acres of underwater fish habitat in the lake. This goal to improve the fishery will have been accomplished with the contribution of over 150,000 hours of volunteer assistance, building and placing the structures. Economically, the volunteers saved the program millions of dollars in labor costs; to the community, the improved fishery means millions of dollars are generated annually through sport fishing. The habitat structures will require minimal maintenance through their life expectancy of over 50 years, therefore monitoring and maintenance by BLM will be necessary.

The heavily used shoreline fishing access sites were developed through the partnership for non-boating anglers. They are located on national wildlife refuges, city shoreline, BLM public lands and a BLM concession. An additional site is under construction at the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge, with completion expected by mid-2003.

The native fish population management goal will be achieved with 30,000 bonytail chub and 30,000 razorback suckers stocked into the lake by the end of 2003. Monitoring has shown these populations are growing and thriving. In addition to the program partners, this component has been assisted by staff and growout facilities on Arizona tribal lands.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

This partnership program exemplifies the DOI Secretary's "4 C's" – Consultation, Communication, Cooperation, and Conservation. Each component of the program has been successfully developed and implemented utilizing these principles. Government agencies, private industry, community organizations and individuals have worked diligently to accomplish shared goals throughout the program's 10-year history.

DATE: 9/3/02

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Cindy Barnes, Rangeland Management Specialist

SUBJECT: Range Management – Standards & Guidelines Evaluations

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

Update progress on conducting Standards & Guidelines evaluations on the allotments administered by the Lake Havasu Field Office.

ISSUE:

Standards & Guideline evaluations are required for all 17 grazing allotments administered by LHFO.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

Two evaluations have been completed. A third evaluation will be completed by the end of FY2002. Six additional allotment evaluations are in progress. All LHFO evaluations and associated permit renewals are scheduled for completion by 2007.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Standards & Guidelines Evaluations are a high priority for the Bureau of Land Management. They will be achieved in coordination with interested parties including the Rangeland Resource Team. This coordination effort affects the time needed for completion of the evaluations.

DATE: September 23, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Patricia Taylor, Assistant Field Manager for Lands & Customer Service

SUBJECT: Special Activities Recreation Area (SARA) Park Lease

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

This document provides the status of SARA Park Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Lease AZA-7567 with Mohave County.

ISSUE:

SARA Park remains without substantial developments due to lack of funding by Mohave County, the lessee.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The Mohave County Board of Supervisors has entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with Lake Havasu City for development and management of the lease. Mohave County will continue to hold the lease with BLM until its expiration on July 18, 2009.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

BLM would like to see SARA Park developed and will continue to work with Mohave County and Lake Havasu City.

DATE: September 23, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lake Havasu Field Office

PREPARED BY: Gina Trafton, RMP Team Lead

SUBJECT: Lake Havasu Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

October 2002 quarterly status briefing for the Resource Advisory Council (RAC).

ISSUES:

1. LHFO submitted a revised Pre-Plan (including revised schedule and budget) on June 12, 2002, and is awaiting response from the State Office.
2. On August 13, 2002, the AZ State Office (SO) accepted and approved the LHFO RMP Scoping Report. The report will be placed on the web and letters will be mailed to agencies and the public inviting their review and comments for 30 days of the planning criteria, and to assist in Plan Formulation. Public Open House meetings will be scheduled, in addition to meetings with agencies and user groups.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The LHFO Scoping Report reflected hundreds of comments regarding how BLM should manage public land. To insure all comments were addressed in the Scoping Report, the comments were analyzed and grouped into issues. The most frequently raised issues by the public include: 1) access to public lands, 2) desire for additional boat ramps on the south end of Lake Havasu, 3) request for a trail around Lake Havasu, and, 4) no additional wilderness designations. LHFO did not receive any requests from agencies or tribes to be Cooperating Agencies for the RMP.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: Issues above need to be resolved. Current schedule follows:

GENERAL SCHEDULE: (Revised June 2002)	DATE
Fed Register NOI	08/2001
Prep Plan	03/2001
Scoping	10/2001 through 01/2003
Resource Assessment	Now through 06/2003
Draft Plan/Draft EIS	04/2004
Proposed Plan/ Final EIS	09/2004
Approved Plan/ROD	04/2005

DATE: September 23, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL**Lake Havasu Field Office**

PREPARED BY: Patricia Taylor, Asst Field Manager for Lands & Customer Service

SUBJECT: Underground Fuel Tank Contamination at Big Bend Resort

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

This document provides the status of cleanup leaking underground fuel tank contamination at Big Bend Resort.

ISSUE: Extensive gasoline leaks from underground fuel tanks have heavily contaminated soil and groundwater adjacent to the Colorado River, threatening the quality of drinking water and riparian habitat at the Big Bend Resort (a BLM concession lease). The California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB) has issued a cleanup and Abatement Order to BLM and the concession operator.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

BLM has issued a contract to determine the extent of contamination and remedial cost estimates. As a result of this contract, BLM has forwarded the Work Plan to CRWQCB for review and approval, and has requested a Section 401 water quality permit be issued for conducting the next phase in the cleanup process.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

BLM will continue to obtain funding and pursue cleanup at Big Bend.

DATE: September 19, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

SUBMITTED BY: Shela McFarlin, Tucson Field Manager

PREPARED BY: Tucson Field Office Staff

1. SUBJECT: The Status of Planning Efforts in the Ironwood Forest National Monument

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: This document describes the planning efforts undertaken to date by the Tucson Field Office, BLM, to complete the Ironwood Forest National Resource Management Plan/Monument Environmental Impact Study.

ISSUES: The scoping process for the proposed Ironwood Forest National Monument Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement began with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register April 24, 2002. Open house meetings were held in July in Mesa, Casa Grande, Eloy, Arizona City, Marana, Tucson, Sells, and Green Valley, Arizona, to seek local participation and input. A total of 190 individuals attended the open houses.

Approximately 7,000 comments have been received with more expected; this includes written comments and letters received at the meetings and received via electronic mail. A cursory analysis of the comments reveals that the overwhelming majority of comments are being received from all over the country -- approximately 5 percent are from within the State of Arizona. A few comments have been received from other countries including Mexico, Canada, Spain, Germany, Singapore, and Great Britain. The majority of the comments, estimated at about 95 percent, favor strong conservation practices be implemented to protect the objects for which the monument was created. Major issues identified include grazing, recreational opportunities, visitor facilities, mining, off-road vehicle use, and cultural and natural resource protection, protection of threatened and endangered species and preserving the desert bighorn sheep population.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The Bureau of Land Management, Tucson Field Office, will continue to keep the public informed about planning in the Ironwood Forest National Monument and to seek their assistance in identifying issues and formulating alternatives. The scoping and planning criteria report should be completed in September 2002.

2. SUBJECT: Asarco Trespass

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To summarize the issues involving the unauthorized use of land by ASARCO mining company (ASARCO, dba, Silver Bell Mining, LLC) in the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

ISSUES: Trespass by ASARCO Mining Co. for Unauthorized Placement of Facilities on 2.5 acres in the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: ASARCO operates the Silver Bell mine and ancillary facilities adjacent to monument lands in south central Arizona. After designation of the monument, ASARCO discovered that a pipeline, overhead electric line and unpaved road are located within the monument boundary. These facilities, which encompass approximately 2.5 acres, were never properly permitted under the general mining or realty laws and went unnoticed before monument designation.

A Notice of Trespass was mailed to ASARCO on May 17, 2002, informing ASARCO that the placement of facilities in the monument was unauthorized. The notice is part of the BLM regulatory process for resolving unauthorized use, either through a negotiated resolution or by removal of the facilities. ASARCO subsequently agreed to discontinue use of the pipeline, removed hazardous substances from the line, and placed a \$100,000 bond to ensure removal of all facilities and reclaim the disturbed area. The bond must be maintained in effect until removal of the unauthorized facilities, and will ensure that ASARCO performs proper abandonment and reclamation of the site. Several conservation organizations have expressed concern regarding the trespass and have requested that the BLM perform an environmental analysis of the trespass abandonment plan to ensure that comprehensive monitoring and reclamation requirements are put in place, and ensure that the site is abandoned and reclaimed properly.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM will continue to work with ASARCO to ensure that all facilities are removed and the area is properly reclaimed. The BLM will also continue to work with conservation groups to facilitate communication between the community and ASARCO to ensure that everyone understands the remedies to the unauthorized use.

3. SUBJECT: Target shooting in the Ironwood Forest National Monument

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To provide information regarding target shooting in the Ironwood Forest National Monument and the safety issues involved with this activity

ISSUES: Recreational target shooting has greatly increased within the Ironwood Forest National Monument over the last several years. There are several reasons for this increase. First, a number of shooting ranges and/or areas close to Tucson where people could shoot have been closed. Secondly, there has been a large increase in the number of individuals moving to lands adjacent to the Monument who view this land as open to shooting as well as hunting. There are many areas with residences adjacent to and within the Monument on private lands. Frequently individuals have been observed shooting toward occupied residences or other visitors or lessee's that may be within several miles of the target area, well within the range of a modern firearm. Although not a safety issue, considerable trash is left by target shooters. There is also a large amount of protected native vegetation that is damaged by gunfire within the monument.

Several shooting groups and individuals who target shoot have expressed concern about placing any limitations on target shooting within the monument. They believe that through proactive educational outreach combined with law enforcement patrols that the area can be managed safely with minimal resource damage. Concerns have also been expressed that a limitation on target

shooting would only be a precursor to a decision to remove hunting from the monument. These groups/individuals also believe that any solution to the problems in the Ironwood Monument need to be addressed from a Tucson basin-wide perspective, since there are insufficient shooting ranges or shooting sites in the Tucson area for target shooting.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE The BLM allows target shooting as well as hunting on lands under its jurisdiction. The Code of Federal Regulations, 43 CFR, Subpart 8365, Parts 1-4 does stipulate that “No person shall cause a public disturbance or create a risk to other persons on public lands by engaging in activities which include, but are not limited to, (2) Creating a hazard or nuisance.” This includes willfully defacing personal property, structures, cultural or historic sites, and includes the destruction of plants, and natural objects, among others. Thus, if target-shooting causes harm to a resource, is undertaken in an unsafe manner or otherwise negatively impacts BLM lands, it can be regulated or banned.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM is concerned about the safety of residents and visitors to the area who are at risk from unsafe shooting practices. BLM has posted signs in the area with safety messages for target shooters. The Tucson Field Office has also increased the number of law enforcement rangers patrolling the area, and they have issued several citations for creating a public hazard.

The BLM is utilizing a contract with the Udall Center to establish a series of public meetings on the issues associated with recreational target shooting in the Tucson basin, including the Ironwood Forest National Monument. These meetings will be designed as an inclusive process to bring shooting groups, concerned private citizens, and other governmental agencies to the table to have comprehensive discussions regarding the issue(s) and to develop appropriate solutions.

4. SUBJECT: Report to Congress on protection of certain lands north of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (“Missing Link”), Tucson, Field Office.

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: Status of Report to Congress on assessment of protection measures for certain land north of the Sonoita Valley Acquisition Planning District (“Missing Link”).

ISSUES: In December 2000, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (NCA) and Acquisition Planning District was created by passage of HR 2941. The 42,000-acre conservation area is bordered on the north and east by lands within the Acquisition Planning District, but not designated part of the NCA. Located north of the Acquisition Planning District are lands commonly referred to as the “missing link,” that include Pima County’s Cienega Creek Preserve and Colossal Cave Mountain Park. The legislation recognized that these lands, although not under Federal management, should be protected as they are a critical ecological link from the NCA to important protected Federal land to the north. The BLM’s Tucson Field Office contracted with The Sonoran Institute to conduct an assessment of the protection measures for these non-Federal, “missing link,” lands. The Sonoran Institute conducted a technical workshop

attended by a variety of resource experts and two open house workshops for interested public. A draft report has been completed and is being reviewed by the Tucson Field Office. The report includes data on natural and cultural resources – including ecological linkages – in the study area compiled from the technical workshop as well as a compilation of preferred management strategies from resource experts at the technical workshop and the public at the open houses. The completed report will describe the most effective measures to protect important resources and ecological linkages between the NCA and Saguaro National Park and the Rincon Mountains, while recognizing the social and economic needs and desires of local landowners and community members.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The BLM Tucson Field Office supports the completion of this study to fulfill the language set forth in HR 2941 to submit a Report to Congress not later than two years after the date of the signing of the Act.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The study complies with the legislation set forth by Congress, and provides valuable data about the natural and cultural resources of the area. The NCA and surrounding area are a vital component of Pima County's watershed, and Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

5. SUBJECT: Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement Protest Resolution

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To describe status of protest resolution on the Proposed Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement

ISSUES: The Proposed Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement was issued in June 2002. One protest letter was received during the 30-day protest period from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD). Representatives of CBD did not attend any of 70 + meetings or provide written comments during the six-year collaborative public planning process with the exception of a comment letter submitted on the Draft RMP/DEIS. CBD's protest letter contains 19 protest issues with multiple issues discussed under each of the main issue headings. Most of the issues were raised in the comment letter on the draft plan and responded to in the Proposed Plan/FEIS. The protest issues address construction of alternatives, description and prioritization of acquisitions, wilderness consideration, global warming, scientific record, increase in grazed area, grazing in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, grazing utilization limits, monitoring, residual cover for wildlife, grazing in riparian areas, watershed condition, water quality, threatened and endangered species, archeological resources, recreation and social impact, economic analysis, roads, and utility corridors. The Tucson Field Office has prepared a draft response to the protest letter, which will be reviewed by the Arizona State Office and Washington Office. The Washington Office will prepare the final response for the Director's signature. The Approved Plan and Record of Decision will be published following resolution of the protest.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The proposed Las Cienegas RMP has been developed through a public collaborative process and emphasizes adaptive management centered on monitoring, which will be used to determine appropriate levels of use in relation to capacities.

The fact that only one protest letter was received on the proposed plan is indicative of the high level of public participation and collaborative approach used in this planning effort. Almost all the protest issues were previously raised as issues in the comment letter on the draft plan.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: A protest response is being prepared by the Field Office for the State Office and Washington Office review and action. The Approved Plan and ROD will be published after resolution of the protest.

6. SUBJECT: White Canyon Resource Conservation Area OHV Issues

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: This document provides a report on the White Canyon Resource Conservation Area OHV Issues, including a recent Special Recreation Permit application from the Arizona State Association of 4 Wheel Drive Club (ASA4WDA), a non-profit organization, for use of a route called “Jawbreaker,” among others, for an organized OHV event

ISSUES: The club has proposed using a portion of Martinez Canyon in the subject area in conjunction with an event called “Jamboree.” The proposed use is intended to offer a recreational opportunity to specially modified vehicles equipped to traverse over extreme route conditions. This route called “Jawbreaker,” was permitted in 2000 and 2001 by BLM and traverses in and out of a historic road along Martinez Canyon. In 1999, trimming and clearing work was done on this route without BLM authorization to make it passable by vehicles. The route was permitted in October 2000 under an administrative exception, subject to monitoring, and made any future use contingent on results of the monitoring. Resource monitoring of Martinez Canyon has shown that the riparian and cultural values have been declining. A Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment was conducted on the riparian areas along this canyon in 2001. It indicated the riparian area is ‘functioning at risk.’ The resource specialists conducting the assessment recommended remedial action, further assessment and monitoring, and a review of current management practices. This segment is the preferred route for many club members.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: If ASA4WDA cannot use this preferred route, it has indicated that this will be the ‘test case’ and this will be raised as a ‘significant issue’ with the club. An appeal could be filed, however the event is scheduled for Oct. 16-20.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: During the application and analysis process, BLM worked closely with officials from ASA4WDC to formulate alternatives and mitigation. BLM informed the applicant of the possibility of not approving the use of the “Jawbreaker” route several times during the process. Members of the public had the opportunity to provide input to the Environmental Analysis. We received and incorporated comments from the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership, AZ Game and Fish, ASA4WDC officials, and BLM staff. BLM has always conveyed the current OHV designation of “Jawbreaker” as not an open route. This part of Martinez Canyon will be rested from all OHV use. A PFC evaluation will be completed in

FY 2003. Appropriate use objectives, including OHV use, will be determined as part of future management planning for the area.

7. SUBJECT: San Pedro Water Issues and Partnerships

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: Provide an update to water issues on the San Pedro River and Upper San Pedro Partnership.

ISSUES: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). Declining surface flow in the river threatens habitat for aquatic species and more than 400 species of birds that utilize the SPRNCA. Other uses impacted by declining flow in the river include scientific and educational study, a variety of recreational activities, and critical habitat for four special status species. Some groundwater models show that the river's perennial flow could cease in less than 25 years. Nearby Fort Huachuca depends on the same groundwater supply as Sierra Vista and other communities in the area. That groundwater supply is also the source of the San Pedro River flow. Water rights in the San Pedro Watershed are presently being adjudicated. Protecting this critical habitat is complicated by land ownership patterns in the region.

A Federal reserve right was created as part of the legislation establishing the SPRNCA. BLM has filed for an in stream flow water right with the State of Arizona, and is also amending its federal reserved right. The adjudication schedule may leave BLM with less than one year to complete the federal reserved right quantification. A team has been established to prepare a strategy and gather the data needed to quantify the minimum amount needed for the reservation. The team includes BLM specialists and managers from the National Science and Technology Center, Arizona and Washington offices, the Solicitor's Office, as well as the Departments of Interior and Justice representatives.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The State courts have recognized that the federally reserved water right confers some protection against damage to the SPRNCA from groundwater pumping. Legal action to protect the river flow is a possibility, and some groups have urged that BLM do so. However, the present and preferred alternative is through our cooperation with local agencies, organizations and individuals in the Upper San Pedro Partnership. The objective of the Partnership is to develop a water conservation plan that meets the water needs of the SPRNCA, the local communities, and Fort Huachuca. Recent Congressional appropriations of about one million dollars in each of the past three years have allowed studies and pilot projects on storm water and effluent recharge, water conservation, groundwater modeling, and SPRNCA water needs to proceed. Early results are encouraging, although whether a practical solution exists over the long term is uncertain. The Partnership continues to grow, embracing every segment of the community. The latest member is the largest water company in the Upper San Pedro Basin, an important addition.

Local governments have made attempts to mitigate impacts of groundwater pumping. An agreement between Fish and Wildlife Service and Fort Huachuca allows the Fort to mitigate possible impacts from groundwater pumping on endangered species with participation in the projects of the Upper San Pedro Partnership. However, local governments support continued growth for economic reasons. Many groups and individuals active in the area have conflicting agendas. Some of the more prominent, recurring themes are environmental protection, economic growth, and resistance to governmental controls. Hydrologic and related studies intended to guide decisions are voluminous, complicated, and occasionally

contradictory. They are often challenged when they do not support conflicting agendas. Federal, State and local governments, through the Upper San Pedro Partnership, are working together with universities and private organizations to develop a common set of studies to determine the water needs of the SPRNCA and also to develop acceptable conservation strategies.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM has pursued multiple, but parallel, tracks to help mitigate the effects of groundwater pumping in the region. These include: 1) acquiring agriculture fields adjacent to the river and retiring irrigation; 2) developing an agreement with the City of Sierra Vista to recharge treated wastewater back to the aquifer; 3) acquiring conservation easements to limit urban development adjacent to the SPRNCA; 4) and participation in the Upper San Pedro Partnership.

DATE: September 16, 2002

BRIEFING FOR THE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

PREPARED BY: Maureen Merrell, Acting Field Manager, Yuma Field Office

1. SUBJECT: CIBOLA-TRIGO HERD MANAGEMENT AREA FOR WILD BURROS

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: The BLM in Arizona has actively managed the Cibola-Trigo herd of wild burros to attain the appropriate management level (AML) in order to eliminate degradation of lands and resources attributable to excessive numbers of animals.

ISSUES: During the early 1990's, budget constraints hampered BLM's ability to maintain the Cibola-Trigo burro population at an appropriate management level. Severe drought conditions in the southwest exasperated the situation. Burros out-competed bighorn sheep and deer for water and forage and concentrated their numbers on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge lands along the lower Colorado River. As the unchecked population became increasingly apparent on the landscape, agency and public concern turned first to criticism, and later, to outright anger. BLM received numerous letters of complaint from concerned citizens, interest groups, State and Federal agencies, the Yuma County Board of Supervisors, and congressional delegates. The situation reached its worse when the FWS insisted that the boundary of the Cibola-Trigo herd management area (HMA) be redrawn and informed BLM that it would no longer allow burros to use refuge lands to gain access the Colorado River.

The AML for the portion of the Cibola-Trigo HMA in Arizona is 165 wild burros. The AML was set in 1980. The AML was more or less maintained throughout the early 1980s. In the late 1980's, the population increased unchecked and exceeded the AML in the 1990s. In 1997, BLM was forced to conduct an emergency removal of 378 burros from the HMA in response to two consecutive years of severe drought conditions, which exacerbated ongoing adverse environmental impacts resulting from the overpopulation of burros. Since 1997, BLM has taken significant strides to rectify this situation. In 1999, BLM gathered 137 burros, and an additional 457 burros were gathered in 2000. In 2002, the BLM gathered 252 burros to attain the AML of 165.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The recent gathers are recognized by other government agencies and constituents as a good faith effort to abate the degradation of natural and cultural resource values that was occurring not only on public lands, but also on refuge lands and the Yuma Proving Ground. Government agencies and constituents have ceased writing letters of complaint, and instead have helped BLM revise and implement census and monitoring techniques in the HMA, develop proposed revisions to the HMA boundaries, and allow reasonable numbers of burros to continue to access the Colorado River

on refuge lands. In 1999, the Department of the Army contributed \$80,000 to BLM's gathering effort. Wild horse and burro advocacy organizations have monitored BLM's actions, but have not challenged the gathers proposed in recent years. BLM will have to be vigilant to maintain the population at AML to stay in good standing with our partners.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: BLM objectives are to attain AML, but funding must be continued to maintain the AML.

2. SUBJECT: FLAT-TAILED HORNED LIZARD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: The BLM in Arizona has been an active participant in the *Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Rangewide Management Strategy (FTHL Strategy)*, dated May 1997, and a subsequent *Conservation Agreement* for the species.

ISSUES: In June 1997 a *Conservation Agreement* for the flat-tailed horned lizard was completed among several Federal and State agencies, including the BLM in Arizona and California. The signatories to the *Conservation Agreement* agree to implement the management actions identified in the *FTHL Strategy*. In Arizona, management actions include the establishment of a FTHL management area on lands within the Barry M. Goldwater Range and the Bureau of Reclamation's 5-Mile Zone. The Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1999 and Department Manual 613, respectively, eliminated BLM's management responsibility on these lands. However, the Department of the Navy and the Bureau of Reclamation are also signatories to the *Conservation Agreement*, and the BLM in Arizona continues to manage approximately 1,500 acres of habitat in the lizard's historic range.

OHV groups and other public land users are concerned about restrictions on their activities from implementation of the *FTHL Strategy*. Organizations and individuals demanding listing of the species brought suit against the FWS. The FWS decision not to list the species was reversed and remanded by the U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, on July 31, 2001. FWS is soliciting comments on the listing, and BLM will submit their comments before July 29, 2002. FWS will decide whether to list the species threatened by December 2002.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The *FTHL Strategy* was prepared by members of the scientific community and technical experts representing Federal, State, and local government agencies using the same format the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) uses for recovery plans. The *FTHL Strategy* calls for establishment of five management areas, including one in Arizona. It also recommends management actions necessary to limit surface disturbance and minimize loss or degradation of habitat within the management areas. The *FTHL Strategy* creates an interagency coordinating committee and a management oversight group to oversee and evaluate implementation of these management actions.

The *Conservation Agreement* for Flat-tailed horned lizards was an important factor in a 1997 decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to withdraw the proposed rule to list the flat-tailed horned lizard as threatened. Signatories to the *Conservation Agreement* are incorporating management actions from the *FTHL Strategy* into their land use plans. In Arizona, the Department of the Navy is currently preparing an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for lands within the Barry M. Goldwater Range, including those in the flat-tailed horned lizard management area.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The Department supports collaborative approaches such as the *FTHL Strategy* designed to provide sufficient protection of sensitive species to avoid the necessity of listing species as threatened or endangered. The Yuma Field Manager is an active participant in the

intergovernmental agency Management Oversight Group (MOG) that monitors conservation plans and activities.

3. SUBJECT: HARVEY'S FISHING HOLE SUBDIVISION PROPOSED LAND EXCHANGE

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: Residents at Harvey's Fishing Hole, a 27-acre subdivision on public lands, have formed a corporation known as Sportsman's Paradise, Inc., and are seeking to complete a land exchange with BLM. Pending completion of an exchange, occupancy has been authorized under leases issued pursuant to 43 CFR 2920. An initial exchange meeting has been conducted with Sportsman's Paradise, Inc., and final approval of a feasibility report is pending additional information, which they have agreed to provide.

ISSUES: Exchange of the public lands at Harvey's Fishing Hole for better riparian and threatened and endangered species habitat along the Colorado River would resolve longstanding occupancy trespass and further the management goals of the BLM, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: Harvey's Fishing Hole (HFH) is a 27-acre trespass subdivision located about 16 miles south of Blythe, California, in Imperial County. The subdivision occupies public land on the California bank of the Colorado River. The subdivision contains 96 lots, many of which are unimproved. Forty-seven of the lots have some type of residential improvement. Few occupants are permanent, full-time residents. Most of the occupants are California residents who use the home sites for weekend recreation and extended vacations. Residential improvements range from moderate homes to small travel trailers. As a temporary resolution of the long-standing occupancy trespass at HFH, each residence has been authorized through leases. The leases are renewed on an annual basis pending final disposition of the proposed land exchange. In the interim, no improvements are allowed by the BLM other than minimal maintenance and repairs.

HFH was initially identified as part of an ongoing exchange with Catellus Corporation. When Catellus Corporation dropped HFH from its list of selected lands, Sportsman's Paradise, Inc., requested a land exchange with BLM. BLM specialists have met with representatives of Sportsman's Paradise, Inc., on several occasions to identify potential offered lands. At this time, two parcels are under consideration for exchange. The two offered parcels are located on what is commonly referred to as the Palo Verde Oxbow Backwater.

If acquired, the offered parcels would be managed as priority wildlife habitat, which is the designation that all riparian areas administered by the BLM along the Colorado River receive under the Yuma District Resource Management Plan. The Oxbow and the adjacent Colorado River are home to a variety of non-native fish including bass, catfish, and sunfish. This portion of the Colorado River is critical habitat to the endangered razorback sucker. Also, portions of the offered parcels have the potential to be restored as habitat for the endangered Yuma clapper rail.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The Department would support the disposal of the HFH public lands on the Colorado River if higher value riparian and threatened and endangered species habitat along the river can be acquired in return. If HFH is not exchanged, it will be managed for its recreational value, and private residential use will not be continued. Congressman Duncan Hunter supports resolution of the occupancy trespass through a land exchange with HFH residents. At this time, surrounding landowners also seem to be in support of the proposed exchange.

4. SUBJECT: YUMA FIELD OFFICE RECREATION PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To provide information on some of the unique aspects of recreation and visitor services and activities in the Yuma area.

ISSUES: The Yuma Field Office manages two Long Term Visitor Area (LTVA) campgrounds. One is located south of Quartzsite, Arizona and one is northwest of Yuma, in California. This is a unique project managed jointly with California BLM. Yuma coordinates the LTVA program with the El Centro and Palm Springs Field Offices, managers of five additional LTVAs. Visitors from all over the U.S., Canada, and other countries camp in these locations for up to seven months during the mild September to April season. YFO issues 8,000 to 11,000 vehicle permits each season. There are 80 to 100 volunteers assisting BLM with recreation and visitor services. A large group of volunteers staff contact stations, sell permits, and handle front line visitor service duties. Visitors have access to central potable water, trash collection, and RV dump station sites. YFO manages seven other fee demonstration pilot project sites that serve thousands of visitors annually, providing campgrounds, boat ramps, restrooms, showers and day-use facilities for water and land based recreational pursuits. Fee collections exceed \$600,000 annually. These Bureau managed sites are supplemented by two concession facilities on the Colorado River, which provide full service RV hookups, mobile home sites, marinas, convenience markets, fuel sales and other resort amenities.

Yuma also administers an 84-mile segment of the Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail. A partnership has been established with the City of Yuma through a Heritage Area designation to address recreation opportunities along this historic route, including the development of an OHV and equestrian trail.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The LTVA program exists only in the Yuma Field Office and the California Desert District. This has been a successful effort to manage large numbers of visitors over long periods of time, while minimizing adverse impacts. YFO experienced significant reductions in appropriated funding for recreation and facility maintenance and is concerned about the potential inability to fulfill public expectations for enhanced facilities, environmental education, habitat improvement and other commitments with the public and our partners.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The recreation fee demonstration pilot authority is due to expire in 2002. The Bureau currently has 100 pilot projects, which is the maximum currently authorized. This is the third largest fee collection program in the BLM. There will be future opportunities to include additional components as recreation sites are improved. Yuma BLM hopes to pursue an extension and/or other avenues to continue this successful effort.

5. SUBJECT: GILA RIVER CULTURAL AREA (SEARS POINT)

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: The BLM in Arizona is actively seeking partners to revise and implement the Management Plan for the Gila River Cultural Area, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

ISSUES: The Gila River Cultural Area (also known as Sears Point Archeological District) consists of a wide array of archeological sites, including sleeping circles; intaglios and rock alignments; lithic and ceramic scatters; shrines and cairns; aboriginal trails; and most notably, hundreds of petroglyph panels. These resources span thousands of years with some dating as far back as the Archaic Period. The Historic

Period is also represented in the ACEC. The Gila River was an important travel route through central Arizona and some of the rock art in the ACEC was carved by people traveling through the area at various times in history. The Anza National Historic Trail traverses the ACEC. Protection of these sensitive resources from senseless acts of vandalism and commercial theft is of utmost importance. The remote location of these resources, the fractured nature of the county rock, and the high commercial value of archeological resources contribute to their vulnerability. There is evidence that petroglyph panels in the ACEC have been defaced or removed. A greater presence in the ACEC by BLM and its partners will result in more effective use supervision and resource protection. It will also provide enhanced opportunities for public education and traditional Native American uses.

The City of Yuma has expressed an interest in the Gila River Cultural Area from an ecotourism perspective, and has offered to help fund the revision and implementation of the management plan including possible development of equestrian and OHV trails along the route at the Anza National Historic Trail. Native Americans may continue to use the area for religious or other purposes. The position(s) of interested parties, including Native American tribal governments and the City of Gila Bend will be taken into account as the plan is revised and implemented.

Negotiations are being initiated with private landowners within and adjacent to the ACEC, and a request has been submitted to the Washington Office for Land and Water Conservation Funds to acquire these inholdings in FY-2003.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: A Management Plan for the Gila River Cultural Area was prepared by the Phoenix District Office in 1990. The plan calls for consolidation of land ownership within the 3620 acre area that has been designated as a ACEC for its cultural resource values. The plan also calls for a number of additional management actions related to the protection and interpretation of the cultural resource values in the ACEC. The cultural resources in the ACEC are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some of the private lands have been acquired since the plan was written, and jurisdiction over the ACEC now rests with the Yuma Field Office. The decade-old plan needs to be updated and fully implemented to achieve management objectives, including protection and interpretation of the cultural resources to preserve their scientific, socio-cultural, and public values.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The Department supports partnerships and collaborative approaches to resource management. The Department also supports preservation and protection of our national heritage.

6. SUBJECT: WALTER'S CAMP CONCESSION LEASE

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: Congressional action is necessary to revoke the withdrawal of 140.32 acres of public land currently included within the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge that are also encumbered by an RV park, store, and small marina, commonly known as Walter's Camp, under the authority of a BLM recreation concession contract.

ISSUES: Walter's Camp is a BLM Recreation Concession operated under Concession Contract CAAZCA 6637 by Walter's Camp, Inc., on land adjacent to the lower Colorado River in Imperial County, California near and within the southern boundary of the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. The current contract was issued by BLM on April 15, 1980, under the provisions of Section 10 of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 for a period of 20 years. Two one-year extensions to the current contract have since been issued.

Walter's Camp was first authorized in 1962. On August 21, 1964, Public Land Order 3442 withdrew 16,627 acres along the Colorado River in Arizona and California, and established the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. The withdrawal erroneously included Walter's Camp within the southern boundary of the California portion of the new Refuge. Neither BLM nor FWS immediately recognized the mistake in legal descriptions on the ground; and therefore, BLM continued to renew the original permit with minor modifications and the recreational concession use has continued unbroken up to the present time. The 140.32 acres in question are also withdrawn from public entry through withdrawals of February 19, 1929, and October 16, 1931, for the use of the Bureau of Reclamation in connection with the Colorado River Storage Project.

BLM's authority to manage withdrawn lands along the Colorado River derives from Departmental Manual 613 (#1443), as amended in September 1984 (#2594), which specifically excludes refuge lands:

613 DM 1.2. Responsibility. The BLM is assigned full responsibility for the implementation of the Plan (Lower Colorado River Land Use Plan) including: negotiation, execution, and administration of leases...

613 DM 1.3. Exceptions. The responsibilities assigned in 613 DM 1.2 do not apply to:

A. Refuges administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thus, BLM does not have authority to continue issuing concession contracts for Walter's Camp.

The FWS has determined that the 140.32 acres erroneously included in Public Land Order 3442 are not necessary nor desirable as part of the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. These lands have insignificant, if any, existing wildlife habitat value or potential wildlife habitat value. Removal of the 140.32 acres of land from the Refuge would free-up the area necessary for the continuation of the recreational concession while still affording more than adequate protection for the nearest significant wildlife habitat feature, which is a restored wetland called Three Fingers Lake. Also, FWS has determined that the river access and other public services provided by the concessionaire are more appropriate uses when located outside the Refuge and managed by BLM.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: A draft Bill to revoke the withdrawal of certain public lands and remove them from the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge was developed by the Regional Director, Region 2, Fish and Wildlife Service in September 2000, as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress has determined that certain lands no longer serve the National Wildlife Refuge purposes for which they were withdrawn and that the withdrawal should be revoked.

Sec.1. Public Land Order 3442 of August 21, 1964, which withdrew approximately 16,627 acres of land from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, and reserved their use as the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, is hereby partially revoked as to the following described lands:

San Bernardino Meridian, T. 11 S., R. 22 E., Section 6, all of Lots 1, 16, and 17, and SE 1/4 SW 1/4, in Imperial County, California, aggregating approximately 140.32 acres.

Sec. 2. However, these same lands shall remain withdrawn from public entry under the existing withdrawals for reclamation uses for the Lower Colorado River Storage Project.

Legislation to this effect was recently introduced as HR 3937.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM and FWS agree that if enacted, the draft bill would correct a long-standing mistake and restore jurisdiction to the appropriate Federal agency.

7. SUBJECT: YUMA EAST WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: The Yuma East Wetlands Restoration Project is a collaboration of federal, state, county, tribal, and local agencies to restore 1300 acres of the Yuma East Wetlands to its native riparian habitat. Through such collaborative efforts, the BLM hopes to improve its ability to restore, manage, and protect public lands.

ISSUES: The present Yuma East Wetlands ecosystem, located along the Lower Colorado River, has been drastically altered from its historic riparian habitat. Dams, agriculture, and the introduction of non-native plant species have transformed what was once a productive ecosystem of mesquite bosques and cottonwood/willow forests into a highly saline environment that provides low quality habitat for native plants and animals. The current ecosystem is dominated by salt cedar, a non-native invasive plant with a high salt tolerance that out-competes native trees and, for various reasons, provides poor habitat for wildlife.

Through natural channel design, wetland improvements, and revegetation activities, the Yuma East Wetlands Restoration Projects objectives are to restore native riparian and wetlands habitats and to provide a center of cultural learning, environmental education and low-impact recreation for the people of Yuma. Channel and wetland improvements aim to create and enhance fish and wildlife habitats as well as improve water quality throughout the ecosystem. Revegetation measures include enhancing and managing existing native riparian vegetation, removing non-native plant species and replacing with native species, and designing stands of native trees to minimize threat from wildfire. Once the Yuma East Wetlands are established, they will be the site of an interpretive/cultural center and nature park for all community members.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: In participating in collaborative projects such as this, the BLM improves its ability to manage and protect public lands as well as improving communication between the BLM, other agencies and the public.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM believes it to be beneficial to participate in any such collaborative projects now and in the future.

8. SUBJECT: LOWER COLORADO RIVER INTERAGENCY FIRE MANAGEMENT GROUP (FIRE GROUP) FIRE SUPPRESSION, FUELS, AND PRESCRIBED FIRE PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: To acquaint the RAC with the Fire Group's mission and scope of responsibility for fire management on the Lower Colorado River (LCR).

ISSUES: This interagency fuels and fire management program includes the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, five Indian tribes, and BLM. It is a combined program for fire

suppression, prescribed fire, fuels, mitigation, and planning. The approved Table of Organization for the entire Fire Group identifies a 47 person fire staff. Currently 27 positions are filled, including one of the four currently approved fuels positions. Within the Fire Group, the Fuels Team currently has four identified positions and is proposing 4 additional technical positions. Of the currently approved fuels positions 3 are BLM and 1 is U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Resources include eight engines and 6 fire boats. Wildfire season in this zone overlaps with the prescribed fire season. Most project work consists of contracted hazardous fuels reduction (HR) projects and prescribed burns in the wildland urban interface (WUI). There are approximately 50 red carded individuals in the zone. About 20 of these personnel are BLM Field Office staff who participated in the fire and fuels program as a collateral duty. Field Office management encourages all employees to participate in fire operations in duties including dispatch, resource advisor, driving, etc.

The fuels program is relatively new and most work is completed on an interagency basis. The program was reorganized and re-initiated at the beginning of fiscal year 2002. The current staff is working to identify and define the future workload. The potential is enormous. The Fire Group's Fuels Team currently has responsibility for all identification, planning and implementation of HR and WUI projects for the BLM Yuma and Havasu Field Offices, the Fort Yuma and Colorado River Indian Tribes Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) reservations (including five individual tribal governments), and the Imperial, Kofa, Cibola, Bill Williams River, and Havasu National Wildlife Refuges. This entails an acreage breakdown as follows:

Bureau of Indian Affairs	370,957 acres
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	751,294 acres
Bureau of Land Management	2,800,000 acres
Lower Colorado River (LCR) Total:	3,922,251 acres

In Fiscal Year 2002 (FY02) The Fire Group completed hazardous fuels reduction projects, either mechanical or prescribed fire (Rx) on various agency projects as follows:

BLM: 7 projects for a total of 155 acres (all mechanical).

FWS: 3 projects for a total of 657 acres (all Rx fire).

BIA: 1 project (numerous small sites) for a total of 45 acres (all mechanical).

These are relatively modest accomplishments in consideration of the potential workload associated with the vast amount of hazardous fuels existing along the LCR. Once our three vacant positions and four proposed technical positions are filled, we will be in a position to accomplish perhaps, three times this acreage.

In accordance with the president's Healthy Forests Initiative, outlining the need for aggressive hazardous fuels treatments to return ecosystems to a more natural fire regime, we are gearing up for large scale fuel reduction projects along the LCR. Most of the hazardous fuels in this area consist of the exotic and invasive plant salt cedar or tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*). Salt cedar is an extremely aggressive invader which has virtually extirpated native riparian vegetation such as cottonwood and willows from the LCR corridor. It's dominant stance is primarily a result of altered flood patterns along the LCR due to the

construction of dams and hydro-electric power stations. The elimination of natural flooding events has altered the natural regeneration cycle of riparian plants such as cottonwood. The resulting xeric conditions along the former flood planes have provided ideal conditions for salt cedar to thrive and out compete native vegetation.

Salt cedar has formed extensive monocultures along the LCR over the last 70 years. These almost pure salt cedar stands carry wildfires of great heat and intensity. Combined with the hot, dry and often windy conditions of our desert climate, this often results in extreme fire behavior dangerous to the public and firefighters alike. For this reason, native plant restoration has been adapted as an integral part of our hazardous fuels reduction efforts. We first remove the salt cedar, then replace it with native plant species. Natural flooding events, as occurred prior to construction of the dams, cannot be emulated of course. This requires artificial irrigation methods be left in place for extended periods of time. The result is worth the effort as restored areas do not support wildfires of the intensity and danger associated with salt cedar monocultures. Additional benefits of hazardous fuels reduction and restoration efforts include improved wildlife and riparian plant habitat as well as improved recreational opportunity and access to the LCR.

A variety of means are employed to achieve the goals of hazardous fuels reduction and native plant restoration. Mechanical and prescribed (Rx) fire are combined with chemical herbicide treatments to remove salt cedar and prevent regrowth. Mechanical methods include clearing by heavy equipment combined with either grinding and chipping or piling and burning of the accumulated brush (biomass). We are currently looking into biomass utilization methods including burning of the wood chips by electric power producing plants in Imperial County, California. Other commercial uses for byproducts resulting from large scale hazardous fuel reduction projects are being investigated by the Fire Group.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The LCR Fire Group is a new and evolving partnership between the three primary federal agencies managing lands along the LCR. Equitable funding and support by the three agencies involved will ensure future success of the fire suppression and hazardous fuels reduction efforts along the LCR.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE: The BLM Arizona State Office along with the Yuma and Havasu Field Offices support the LCR Fire Group in its mission and goals for the LCR.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on Field Manager Reports (BLM Field Managers)

DISCUSSION:

Frances Werner asked Don Ellsworth how much trash they have collected and is there a fee to take it to the landfill?

Don Ellsworth: Collected 7-8 tons and there is a fee charged for landfill dumping.

Deborah Stevens: I will start bulleting and matching with the briefing papers of the Field Managers Reports.

Norm Wallen: I think that the longer version is very helpful. I don't understand the matching process. The reports are extremely interesting and it's a loss if we don't get these.

Deborah Stevens: All that I will be putting in the record will be a summary.

Mary Dahl: Couldn't you include a summary statement that you electronically pull?

Deborah Stevens: Yes

Mary Dahl: Since all of us are electronically connected it can be sent this way.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Standards & Guidelines Working Group (Lamar Smith, Chair)

The Standards & Guidelines Working Group committee met yesterday. Some concern was expressed about how fast some of the Standards & Guidelines reviews are being completed. It was suggested that the short form that BLM used on Section 15, Lands and Isolated Tracts. The review team out of Washington recommended that they not use the short form so it hasn't been used since. The Standards & Guidelines working group has written a letter asking the BLM to reconsider reevaluating the use of the short form. Where there are no major issues the process would be faster using the short form. Each RAC member has a copy of the proposed letter. Guidelines need to be set on when the use of the short form would be appropriate and when it would not to avoid possible acquisitions

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: It seems to me that if you need to make a strong case to take another look at this then you need to make your arguments stronger. As I read this I see that the short form was never intended to be used. If I understood it correctly, it suggested that the short form had been used in the past for allotments that don't have resources of a concern, however, if you still want to use the form you would have a good case to request Washington to agree to look at using the short form.

Chris Newell: There is a concern of having to wait a long time not knowing if the permits will be renewed. If a short form is used in areas where there are non-significant resource values that are as issued what is the likelihood that the permit won't be renewed?

Lamar Smith: There is not much likelihood of this happening.

William Branan: What I am concerned with is saving staff time by using the short form when the long form isn't necessary.

Glendon Collins: If our intention is to ask the State Director to reconsider this, it seems the more ground rules you put in this it creates questions. The BLM can apply the message/letter wherever appropriate.

Lamar Smith: We are not preparing a legal document. It is just a formal letter to ask that the issue be revisited.

ACTION: Proposal to send the letter to the State Director asking to modify the short form for Standards & Guidelines Evaluations. Moved by Lamar Smith. Seconded by William Branan. Voted and Passed by the RAC.

With regard to field training to the Standards & Guidelines and to the Rangeland Resource Teams and BLM. The last time we had an RRT meeting we had representatives from all of the RRT's here and spent all day reviewing the Standards & Guidelines and their purpose. How this can be improved and how this works. There was a form for feedback and Lamar Smith did not receive any responses to this effort. They did talk about sending a questionnaire to the RRT people asking them to respond if they have any issues or concerns about the process. An exact date hasn't been chosen.

Chris Newell: I would like to meet on the Arizona Strip.

Norm Wallen: We have also talked about meeting in each place.

Frances Werner: Getting the mix of the different RRT people at this first meeting was very valuable. The concern was to get more RRT people to attend the meetings. It would be nice for all of the groups to get together.

Lamar Smith: The next meeting of the Standards & Guidelines workgroup may be in January.

Merv Boyd: Lamar you mentioned the expense of all of our team members coming. There is a process for volunteers to be reimbursed because it is costly for people to travel out of their area. The scheduling of these meetings may need to be on the weekend to allow people who work during the week to attend.

Bill Civish: What was very helpful to keep people interested is the RAC would assign a member or two to each RRT to help them along.

Chris Newell: I think all of the Arizona monuments for Arizona allow grazing as long as it doesn't impact the monument.

Lamar Smith: The standards are just as important everywhere as well as at the monuments. We will be doing further planning. Please send your suggestions to Lamar Smith or Ron Hooper.

ACTION: Motion by Norm Wallen: The RAC recommends a joint training on the implementation of the Standards & Guidelines to include the RAC, RRT's and BLM staff. Motion seconded by Sandee McCullen. Voted and Approved by the RAC.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Public Relations Working Group (Steve Saway, Chair)

The RAC notes are a way of communicating with the public. With the new RAC members it would be a good idea to update and show the new membership and then mail the information to the members. There is an upcoming meeting in November and a notice will be sent out in time for the public to make plans to attend. If there are any special items to highlight, please give them to Steve Saway.

DISCUSSION:

William Brannan: Thanks to Steve Saway for working on this issue.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Recreation and Tourism Working Group

(Sandee McCullen, Chair)

The Phoenix Field Office is going through planning and Sandee is encouraging the OHV committee to become involved. The MGCP is ongoing and working. Inventory is expected to be complete in early spring. At that point, the plan is to give out maps and go out to the OHV community to indicate and review the maps to make sure that the trails they are using are on the maps. Along with the designation the OHV Management Workshop is upcoming. This plan is supposed to go across State lines. The OHV community is willing to help wherever they can. Another issue is Sandee is going to Kingman this weekend. State Land is starting a trail stewardship plan in Secret Pass. It is in line with the Forest Service Adopt-A-Trail program. Why doesn't BLM have an Adopt-A-Trail program for special trails that need special attention?

DISCUSSION:

John Christensen: We do have one in Kingman.

Don Ellsworth: Lake Havasu has an adopt a trail program.

Sandee McCullen: We have national monuments, NCA's and national land use plans going on now. When doing budgets, an issue that needs to be addressed is how the partnerships and volunteers can be helped. The OHV Workshop is October 21-25, 2002.

Don Ellsworth: The call has to go out to the OHV community as a whole to contact individual riders who don't have an allegiance. They need to be involved in the process.

Sandee McCullen: The individual needs to be educated.

Don Ellsworth: The individual could ruin it for a lot of people.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group

(Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources)

This past year we targeted to remove 640 animals. At last count 638 animals were gathered this year. We have targeted 347 animals to adopt this year. We were more than successful in adopting 447 animals. At

the last couple of adoptions a competitive bid auction was held. At the end of the bidding round there were still animals left in the pens so a second animal was offered to the successful bidders at the cost of \$25. The burro team will get together shortly to discuss future adoptions. They are in the process of working on the budget numbers for next year. They will work towards 300 animals as opposed to 600 animals. At this rate we will achieve all of our appropriate management areas.

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: Would a statement from the RAC be helpful?

Mike Taylor: I'm sure that would be helpful.

Elaine Zielinski: We are still working with the final numbers in Washington. I hear that with the severe problems in other states and the drought it affects all of us. If the RAC would like to voice their concern it would be appropriate.

Mike Taylor: The Arizona program is a mainly a burro program. Washington is looking at the horses so they may feel that increasing the numbers of burros gathered would not impact the system.

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ACTION:

Motion - The RAC recommends that the State Director address a letter to the BLM indicating that we recognize the serious budget issues regarding the Horse & Burro program. However, we urge that Arizona BLM be given maximum flexibility in determining burro-gathering numbers due to special conditions in Arizona.

Moved by Norm Wallen. Seconded by Glendon Collins. Approved by the RAC.

Mike Taylor: Thanks to the RAC for your support over the years on this issue.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period

DISCUSSION: No Comments

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Planning Working Group (Mary Dahl, Chair)

What are the products of these processes? Mary wrote up a draft strategy and sent it to Chris, Shela McFarlin and Frances Werner. What is proposed is BLM responsibility to the RAC members regarding BLM sponsored meetings. When this was discussed yesterday one issue that was raised was at what point might the RAC be able to make formal comment? To do that during the public comment later on in the process may be too late. Shela McFarlin mentioned that in terms of the RAC being informed of briefings being brought to the State Director that the RAC may not receive a lot of lead-time so there might be problems with scheduling. Other issues that need to be addressed are planning efforts that are taking place all over the State and the RAC as a whole cannot be responsible for tracking and participating in the all of these meetings. The RAC should be facilitators for the State Director. The RAC needs to be informed when schedules change.

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: I think this is a great service that Mary has done to prepare this. The only place for the RAC involvement as a total group is indicated on the last page. My only comment is the RAC should choose to make comments at each stage. Before the comments analysis the RAC was told that it would be possible that before monument briefing are released to the public that it can be provided to the RAC members.

Chris Newell: Since the RAC sometimes doesn't meet for several months the process should not be hindered.

Norm Wallen: I feel the RAC can be kept involved via e-mail.

Shela McFarlin: Is the RAC mainly concerned with the draft EIS?

Carl Rountree: You have done a good job of detailing how and when the RAC would like to be involved. I think the purpose of scheduling the RAC's agenda would be for the RAC to specifically mention what process they want to be involved in and when.

Steve Saway: The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership was a successful model with four RAC members being involved as individuals. It would seem to me that we could offer a different type of public review than the normal public review. If this will be moving so quickly maybe we should determine different ways of meeting, i.e. conference call, etc. This may be another alternative. We should be involved at these stages to provide a meaningful contribution.

Mary Dahl: The Field Managers can bring these issues as an agenda item.

Frances Werner: The RAC is a bridge between the public and the BLM and we need the ability to bring what we are hearing forward.

Shela McFarlin: The RAC represents a multiple use prospective.

Norm Wallen: Maybe before we leave today we could identify the people in the RAC that would like to be involved with each monument.

Mary Dahl: I have Chris and Norm Wallen down for the Arizona Strip.

Shela McFarlin: At the alternatives analysis stage a dialog is very helpful. An impacts analysis is also helpful.

Greg Simmons: Once scoping reports are approved the plan is to put them on the Internet. The same is true with the plan alternatives. The problem I see with e-mailing information is the size of graphic files could overload your e-mail.

Norm Wallen: I am most interested in receiving something to review before the information is released to the public.

Mary Dahl: We can meet as a RAC Working Group for discussions and make suggestions.

Carl Rountree: The RAC may want to have a subcommittee for each planning process.

Agua Fria National Monument involvement: Glen Collins, Sanford Cohen, Lamar Smith

Ironwood National Monument: Frances Werner & Steve Saway, Sandee McCullen, Lee Aitken

Sonoran Desert National Monument: Frances Werner, Lee Aitken, Lorraine Eiler, Steve Saway

Lake Havasu : Rick Holloway, John Neal (?Deb will ask him)

Arizona Strip: John Neal (?), Norm Wallen, Chris Newell

Mary Dahl will revise her paper based on all of the comments received today and send them to everyone. Elaine offered for BLM to put on a briefing regarding the planning process for the RAC.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: Why has today's meeting occupied two days?

Frances Werner: A one-day meeting does not allow enough time for the RAC subcommittees to meet. The agenda had enough substantial issues that required previous discussion before the RAC meeting.

Deborah Stevens: The agreement at the last meeting was that the Working Group meetings are truly a working meeting and that discussions previous to the regular meetings will prevent longer discussions at the regular RAC meeting. At the national RAC meeting the first day is the reception for the committee

chairs. The second day is the RAC meeting and the third day will be the RAC broadcast to all 23 RACS who are meeting across the West of issues that were discussed at the conferences the day before the broadcast. We would like to have the meeting here at the NTC. This will be broadcast to all BLM Field Offices. Subcommittees will meet at 8 A.M. on November 20, 2002.

ACTION: N/A

MEETING ADJOURNED